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Rewriting wrongs

Citation for published version:

Desnain, V 2015, 'Rewriting wrongs: French crime fiction and the palimpsest', *French Studies*, vol. 69, no. 3, pp. 421-2. <https://doi.org/10.1093/fs/knv139>

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1093/fs/knv139](https://doi.org/10.1093/fs/knv139)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Published In:

French Studies

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Rewriting Wrongs: French crime fiction and the palimpsest. Edited by ANGELA KIMYONGÜR and AMY WIGELSWORTH. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014. xi + 203 pp.

As pointed out by the editors in the introduction to this collection of essays, the notion of the palimpsest is particularly relevant to crime fiction, which, according to Todorov's definition, is both a story of erasure and one of restoration. More generally, it is a concept that is particularly suited to 'genre' literature, which can be seen as re-writings of the same essential story.

Beyond its overarching theme, the collection also offers an interesting snapshot of some of the themes that have preoccupied crime fiction critics over the past 20 years or so: its relationship with more 'scientific' disciplines, such as history and sociology, its relationship with more 'legitimate' literature and the difficulty inherent in establishing clear boundaries for a genre whose most basic tropes can be found in many 'non crime fiction' texts, as previously demonstrated in relation to le Nouveau Roman (in particular by Simon Kemp, who also appears in this volume).

Part One focuses on French crime fiction's recurrent preoccupation with the murkier periods of French History. In it, Claire Gorrara, pursues her investigation into crime fiction in the context of the Second World War and its aftermath, already prominent in her previous publications; this time with a more specific focus on the persecution of Jews, while Sophie Watt examines novels by Daeninckx and Claudel, as well as films by Gatlif, to show how the fictional 'rewriting' of history also serves as a denunciation of the manipulations of official history and the way in which the process of remembrance is linked to a critique of

contemporary society. Emma Bielecki examines the role played by Arsène Lupin in the construction of a French identity in the early 20th century while Christine Calvert's chapter on Simenon concentrates on private histories and the role of past events in the characters' lives. Part Two puts the spotlight on textual rewritings, including, in Andrew Watts's chapter, television adaptations of Balzac. Alastair Rolls offers a chapter on the intertextual nature of two of Malet's nestor Burma novels, while Adrienne Angelo's piece on Laurens already hints at the subject of Part Three, entitled "imitation, parody, metafiction". In this final part, two of the chapters concentrate on the use made by Calle, Laurens and Nothomb (Elise Huguency-Léger) and Perec (Kemp) of some of the classic tropes of crime fiction. Conversely, Ellen Carter analyses crime writer's Caryl Férey 'borrowings' from Maori and Tahitian authors. The last chapter (Amy Wigelsworth) offers a particularly fitting conclusion to the collection, bringing together issues of conformity to a genre and the innovative rewritings the category permits, while neatly bringing in the notion of the criminal investigation as a literary palimpsest in Simsolo's text about a serial killer who finds his inspiration in Malet's *Les Nouveaux Mystères de Paris*.

Altogether *Rewriting Wrongs* is a fascinating and varied collection in which highlights the fluidity of the boundaries of the genre and well as its continued relevance as a form of social and literary commentary.

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Wordcount: 492